

Chapter 7:

Incentives

Government Programs

There are many nonregulatory government programs that provide technical and financial assistance to landowners who are interested in restoring or conserving wetlands on their property. Most of these programs have limited funding and usually cannot provide assistance to all of the interested landowners. But, these programs have saved thousands of acres of wetlands and are definitely worth considering. Landowners can strengthen their applications to these programs by working with a local land trust. The people and organizations that make up your focus area can also encourage federal, state, and local lawmakers to assign more funds to these popular programs.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)

This program offers landowners payments for restoring former wetlands and conserving existing wetlands on their property. The Farm Service Agency (formerly called the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service) staff work with landowners to secure long-term or permanent conservation easements on the land, and provide cost-share grants and technical assistance for wetlands restoration work. Eligible lands include previously farmed wetlands that were cropped for at least one year between 1986 and 1990. Apply through your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office. (317-290-3202)

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

This program allows landowners to enroll highly erodible lands into the program through 10- and 15-year easements. Farmers take the land out of production, and in return they receive annual rent for the land as well as cost-sharing and technical assistance to plant cover vegetation for conservation. Eligible lands include highly erodible cropland, land that is contributing to a serious water quality problem, or former wetlands. Apply for this program through your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office. (317-290-3202)

Forestry Incentives Program (FIP)

FIP targets private individuals, groups, or associations who own non-industrial private forest land capable of producing industrial wood crops. The program was established to increase the nation's supply of timber products and can be used to restore woody vegetation on bottomland forested areas greater than 10 acres. Apply for this program through your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office. (317-290-3202)

Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)

This is a voluntary cost-share program for agricultural producers who agree to implement a whole-farm plan that addresses major resource concerns. Apply through your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office. (317-290-3202)

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (Public Law 83-566)

This program enables watershed project sponsors to acquire perpetual wetland or flood plain conservation easements to perpetuate, restore, and enhance the natural capability of wetlands and flood plains. PL-566 provides for technical, financial, and credit assistance by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to local organizations representing the people living in small watersheds. Practices which are eligible for cost-sharing include flood prevention, recreational development, groundwater recharge, and fish and wildlife development. Apply through your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office. (317-290-3202)

Natural Resources Conservation Service Technical Assistance

NRCS staff can delineate wetlands, help you develop conservation plans, and suggest income-producing alternatives for the use of wetlands. They can also provide design assistance for wetland restoration projects. (317-290-3202)

Partners for Wildlife (Private Lands Assistance and Restoration Program)

In this program, landowners receive technical and financial assistance to restore degraded or converted wetlands for the primary benefit of wildlife. Special consideration is given to projects that help endangered species, contribute to the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, are located near existing habitat, and use native plant species in the restoration. The program is administered through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), which may give informal advice, design the project, and/or provide all or part of the funding for restoration. Apply through your local U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service office. (812-334-4261)

North American Wetlands Conservation Act

This Act provides cost-share funding for wetlands conservation projects involving acquisition, restoration, or enhancement. You may get more information on this funding from your local U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service office. (812-334-4261)

Agricultural Conservation Program (ACP)

This program provides landowners cost-sharing assistance on agricultural land for carrying out conservation and environmental enhancement practices which have long-term benefits. The ACP is administered by the Farm Service Agency, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical assistance to the participants. Eligible practices include restoring, creating, or enhancing wetlands, and creating shallow water areas for wildlife. Apply for this program through your local Farm Service Agency office. (317-290-3030)

Conservation Easement Program

This program was established to protect important resources (wetlands, riparian areas, natural areas, and other wildlife habitat) through the acquisition of conservation easements from USDA Farm Services Agency borrowers, and to provide debt relief for those borrowers. The value of any land enrolled in this program is deducted from a borrower's loan balance, and a perpetual easement is placed on the land enrolled. Apply through your local Farm Service Agency office. (317-290-3030)

National Natural Landmark (NNL) Program

The goal of this program is to identify, recognize, and encourage the protection of sites containing the best remaining examples of ecological and geological components of the nation's landscape. Landmarks are designated on both public and private land, with the program designed to have the concurrence of the owner or administrator. Apply through the National Park Service. (402-221-3418)

The Indiana Classified Forest Program

This program was established to encourage the retention of forest land in Indiana for the benefits of timber production, watershed protection, and other associated forest benefits. Participating landowners are granted a lowered tax assessment (\$1.00/acre assessed value), an annual newsletter, and periodic woodland inspections by a professional forester in return for following program guidelines. Eligible lands must have at least 10 acres of contiguous forest. Apply for this program through the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry. (317-232-4105)

Classified Wildlife Habitat Act

This program was established to reduce habitat loss on private land by encouraging landowners to develop or save existing wildlife habitat. It targets landowners of grasslands, shrublands, wetlands, woodlands more than 10 acres, and riparian areas. The incentives for landowners to classify their lands are: 1) the reduction of the assessed value of classified lands to \$1 per acre for property tax purposes; 2) free technical assistance and advice. Apply through the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. (317-232-4080)

Appalachian Clean Streams Initiative

The purpose of this program is to clean streams polluted by acid mine drainage resulting from abandoned coal mines. All citizens of southwestern Indiana (the State's coal region) are eligible. For more information on this program or to apply, contact the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Reclamation. (800-772-6463 or 812-665-2207)

Forest Stewardship Program

This program is a cost-share, grant and education program with reimbursement of up to 60% of various forest stewardship conservation practices. The program is open to Indiana forest landowners with at least 10 acres. Among the eligible projects are: 1) tree plantings of at least one acre, 2) timber stand improvement to enhance the production of quality hardwood timber, 3) wildlife habitat improvement projects, 4) wetland improvement projects, and 5) forest road/trail conservation practices. "Challenge Grants" are also provided to individuals and organizations to sponsor programs and projects undertaken by the Division of Forestry and cooperation entities. Apply through the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry. (317-232-4105)

Lake and River Enhancement Program (LARE)

The LARE program provides technical and financial assistance to projects aimed at controlling sediment and nutrient inflows from agricultural sources and other land disturbing activities so as to forestall or reverse the impacts of such inflows and enhance continued use of Indiana's public access lakes or rivers. The program allows grant funds to be used for five basic purposes: 1) preliminary lake evaluations, 2) diagnostic/feasibility studies of lakes, 3) design of lake-related projects, 4) construction of lake-related projects, and 5) land treatment in lake or river watersheds. Projects can include wetland restoration or construction for control of sediment and nutrient inputs. To apply for this program, contact the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Soil Conservation. (317-233-3871)

State Nature Preserve Dedication

This program targets landowners of high quality natural areas and rare species habitat. It was established to protect natural areas and rare species habitats scattered throughout the State. Apply through the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Nature Preserves. (317-232-4052)

Wildlife Habitat Cost-Share Program

The purpose of this program is to encourage landowners to develop wildlife habitat by reducing the cost of its development through reimbursement for 90% of the cost of development of wildlife habitat or \$1,000, whichever is less. Landowners of 10 acres or more wanting to develop permanent wildlife habitat, windbreaks, brushpiles, vegetation management, and wetland development are eligible for this program. To apply, contact the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish and Wildlife. (317-232-4080)

Clean Water Act, Section 319, Nonpoint Source Management Program

This program was established to control pollution from nonpoint sources to the navigable waters of the State and to improve the quality of such waters. Primarily, the grant money from the EPA is used to fund projects to control and clean up nonpoint source pollution. Some constructed wetlands projects have been funded through this program. To apply, contact the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. (317-308-3208)

Clean Water State Revolving Funds (CW-SRF)

The CW-SRF provides low-interest loans for wetland restoration, protection, and construction projects. These loans are available in every state and in Puerto Rico. The CW-SRF programs work like banks. Federal and state money is used to set up the banks, which make low- or no-interest loans for water quality projects. Funds are repaid to the SRFs over a period of up to 20 years. These loans can be helpful to landowners and organizations who are unable to qualify for one of the grant programs listed above. For more information about this program, contact your local CW-SRF Program (IDEM, 317-232-8655) or the CW-SRF branch of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. (800-621-8431)

Nongovernment Programs

Land Trusts

Land trusts are national, state, or local level organizations that seek to protect lands for conservation purposes. This can be accomplished through purchase of title or easements. Trust organizations can also provide technical assistance to private landowners when they purchase conservation easements. National land trust organizations that may be able to help you include The Nature Conservancy (317-923-7547) and the Land Trust Alliance (202-638-4725). Contact local chapters of these groups for additional information.

Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA)

The IWLA is a national conservation organization that has local chapters throughout the country. Many local chapters have land conservation programs that secure funding for conservation easements, educate landowners about functions and values of natural habitats, and work to increase and enforce wetland protection legislation. (301-548-0150)

National Audubon Society

The National Audubon Society is a national conservation organization that has local chapters throughout the country. Many chapters have land acquisition and wildlife sanctuary management programs. (212-979-3000)

American Farmland Trust - Farm Legacy Program

The American Farmland Trust (AFT) is a national, nonprofit organization that encourages farmers to donate lands that are threatened by development to the Farm Legacy Program. Through this mechanism, farmers receive tax benefits and may retain lifetime use of the property if they are interested. After AFT takes possession of the land, it attaches conservation easements to protect the unique aspects, and then resells it. Proceeds from the sale are used to protect other threatened farms. (202-331-7300)

Ducks Unlimited - Matching Aid to Restore States Habitat (MARSH)

MARSH is a program of Ducks Unlimited that provides matching funds to public agencies and private conservation organizations for protection of lands that benefit waterfowl. Private landowners may not apply to the program on their own, but an organization or agency may apply for funding to benefit a private landowner. Apply through the Ducks Unlimited Atlantic Flyway Coordinator. (901-758-3850)

IPALCO Golden Eagle Environmental Grant

The Indianapolis Power & Light Company (IPALCO) provides financial assistance to not-for-profit organizations and governmental units for projects which will preserve, protect, enhance, or restore environmental and biological resources throughout the state of Indiana. Apply through the Indiana Parks and Recreation Association. (101 Hurricane Street, Franklin, IN 46131)

Indiana Tree Farm

This program promotes stewardship of forest resources and recognizes forest landowners who are true and active stewards of their forests. It targets all landowners with at least 10 acres of forest land. Certified Tree Farmers receive the *Tree Farm* magazine and the *Woodland Steward* publication. Apply for this program through the Indiana Hardwood Lumbermen's Association. (317-342-3851)

Southern Lake Michigan Conservation Initiative

This program's purpose is to protect biodiversity in northwestern Indiana, southwestern Michigan and southeastern Chicago. It was established to recruit, train, and develop volunteer stewardship networking. It targets landowners of natural areas in the Southern Lake Michigan Watershed. Apply through The Nature Conservancy. (219-473-4312)

The Limberlost Experience – Restoring Wetlands

Limberlost Focus Area Coordinator Ken Brunswick has lived in the Limberlost area for many years. Over the years, he observed areas where crops were lost on a regular basis due to flooding or high water tables. These were prime areas for wetland restorations. In 1992, Ken spoke with local landowners about restoring the wetlands on these areas and enrolling the land in the CRP program (see section on CRP above). The landowners cooperated with the Limberlost team to restore the following five areas.

- Area 1 This former marsh and wet meadow needed a small ditch plug to close off a small drainage area that was installed in 1984.
- Area 2 A small levee was constructed to close a surface drainage area, and a subsurface drain tile was cut.
- Area 3 A solid riser was placed on the subsurface drain tile, and the water level was set to keep water off the county road right-of-way.
- Area 4 A small levee was constructed, and subsurface drain tiles cut.
- Area 5 No subsurface tiles were found to be draining this area. The contractor smoothed out the area, and nothing else was constructed.

These restorations are beneficial in many ways. The landowners receive annual payments for enrolling the lands in the CRP program. The wetlands provide excellent habitat for waterfowl and many other kinds of wildlife. Mallards, wood ducks, and Canada geese nest there every year, and ground nesting birds use the wet meadow and upland areas. All of the sediments and nutrients that run off from surrounding farm fields are filtered out by the wetlands, so they do not choke the adjacent drainage ditches or pollute downstream water bodies. And water held in the wetlands percolates down into the underground aquifer that provides water for people living in the area. Thanks to these landowners and CRP, many people are reaping the rewards of restored wetlands!